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NEW BOOKS REVIEWED

THE JEWS. By Hilaire Belloc. New York: Houghton Mifflin Company.

It is the frankness of Hilaire Belloc's discussion of the Jewish problem—a frankness as interesting as it is devoid of indelicacy—that gives the principal value to his book. This value is limited, on the other hand, by the fact that the problems, being one of social attitudes rather than tangible political or economic factors, is not subject to regulation in the ordinary sense. There is no public programme to be advocated; the book will do good just so far as it influences the attitudes of individuals.

The Jewish problem, declares the author, exists and cannot be successfully ignored. The method of nineteenth century Liberalism—that of regarding the Jew as a citizen of the country in which he happened to reside, indistinguishable from other citizens except in the peculiarity of his religion and social customs—cannot be maintained, because it contradicts the facts. It is of no use to pretend that the Jew is a member of the French or English nation when all the time he is really a member of the Jewish nation. This method of ignoring the truth has proved feasible for so long as it has done so, only because of specially favorable conditions, and there is no reason for regarding it as a permanent solution. It has worked no longer than have other solutions. Invariably, in the past, the Jewish problem has passed through a certain cycle. First there have been tolerance and even welcome; then, as the Jews became more numerous and more powerful, there have been unrest and dissatisfaction; and finally there have been intolerance and persecution. In England, and perhaps in the United States, the second stage has been reached, and the third stage may not be far off.

Mr. Belloc does not define very concretely what he means by Jewish nationality; one would judge from his discussions that it has no important political aspect, and so the nationality or racial solidarity of the Jews (for these two expressions seem to mean the same thing) seems to be just a factor in what is essentially a social question—a problem of living together.

The ultimate cause of dissension would seem to be a kind of instinctive intolerance between two groups persistently differing in certain more or less indefinable ways as to culture and ideals. The Jew has moral courage, for example, and so, we think, have we. But manifestations of this virtue on the part of the Jew are apt to appear to us in the light of arrogance or obtuseness. Our courage, on the other hand, may appear to the Jew in a no more favorable light. It may seem to him, perhaps, to be mere weakness or folly. The differences are endless and yet so complex and variable that they can scarcely be stated in terms sufficiently exact to avoid unjust implications.

Under these circumstances mutual tolerance between the majority of Jews and the majority of Gentiles—a tolerance based upon a thorough understanding of each other's point of view—would seem an ideal scarcely possible of realization.

But apart from this general cause there are certain special causes of friction which the author enumerates. These are, upon the Jewish side, the expression of superiority and a reliance upon secrecy; upon our side, an equal expression of superiority and a deep-rooted disingenuousness in our attitude toward and dealing with the Jew.

The remedies proposed are of an extremely general nature. The first is "the determination to speak of the Jewish people as openly, as continuously, with as much interest, with as close an examination, as we speak of any other foreign body with which we are brought in contact". The second is "to avoid in the individual public recognition of those with whom we must live, all futile anger and all mere reaction".

All this is perhaps as good general advice as can be given; yet it implies a counsel of perfection. We are to get rid of intolerance by not permitting ourselves to be intolerant. At the same time we are to cultivate frankness; we are not to prepare the materials for an explosion by repressing our real dislikes or aversions through fear or any other motive. The author is especially insistent upon this point. "The suppression of resentment, though that suppression is the act of the men who themselves feel the resentment and not directly of their opponents, is a fierce irritant and accounts for the high pressure at which the attack escapes when once it is loosened." But this last-mentioned recommendation does not make the problem any easier; on the contrary it makes it harder. It is, on the whole, more reasonable to expect that a person will learn tolerance than that, while feeling intolerance and resentment, he will acquire the mentality to give these feelings a just and measured expression.

There is, then, no panacea, no real programme. We are left simply with certain rather obvious moral principles. But Mr. Belloc's book, by virtue of its frankness, its clear statement of facts that are frequently blinked, its accurate appreciation of difficulties and of differing points of view, should make the application of these principles somewhat easier. In this view, it seems that the book might have been even better if its author had ventured to be rather more concrete and a little less cautious. As it is, one feels that there is a trifle too much moral reasoning in the book—reasoning of a rather obvious and elaborate sort. The average reader goes out "by that same door wherein he went", but he is grateful for the formulation of the problem, for the facts and for the statement of authoritative general impressions that are as good as facts.

AN INTRODUCTION TO WORLD POLITICS. By Herbert Adams Gibbons. New York: The Century Company.

It is rather unfortunate that Mr. Gibbons's dissertation sets out, like so